

SUITABILITY OF MILLENNIALS TO LEAD THE PROFESSION OF ARMS

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The Millennial Generation will be entering the highest levels of military service in the coming years and they will be the military's strategic leaders in 2025. The military must begin examination of the generational profile of this cohort in order to match its characteristics with the skills required for the military's strategic leaders in the coming years, tempering those characteristics that might cause national derailment of the Profession of Arms and nurturing those that show positive synchronization with the future landscape. This paper attempts to provide practical advice to today's leader concerning the development of this cohort.

SUITABILITY OF MILLENNIALS TO LEAD THE PROFESSION OF ARMS

Strategic Leaders guide the achievement of their organizational vision within a larger enterprise by directing policy and strategy, building consensus, acquiring and allocating resources, influencing organizational culture, shaping external environments and communicating.

—General George William Casey, Jr¹

It seems each generation thinks less of the one coming behind than it does of itself. This tendency, coupled with fear of an unknown future, can cause great angst for national leaders as they begin to study the global landscape in the out-years and wonder who will be at the helm of the ship of state. It is important to examine research that articulates the generational qualities and characteristics of those who will be at that helm so that we can lay aside fears based on anecdotal evidence and initiate practical actions that will ensure the next generation has leaders ready for the challenges of national power in 2025.

According to Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World, there are some “relative certainties” about the future world situation,

The United States will remain the single most powerful country but will be less dominant. By 2025 a single “international community” composed of nation-states will no longer exist. Power will be more dispersed with the newer players bringing new rules of the game while risks will increase that the traditional Western alliances will weaken.²

In addition to some certainties about the future geo-political climate, we can be relatively certain that tomorrow’s strategic military leaders will need skills similar to those required by today’s leaders because without regard for a single hegemonic global landscape, the world will be filled with challenges that, like today, are volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. A review of information provided by military sources provides one with many terms describing the essential leadership requirements.

Essential Strategic Leadership Requirements

One must determine what skills separate the strategic military leader from the successful leaders at lower levels in order to focus the development of those Millennials who show the most promise. The most important characteristics for the strategic leader are Intellectual Sophistication so that they can form a legitimate vision, Mastery of Communication so that they can establish understanding and support for the vision, and Mature Self-knowledge so that the leader herself does not cause her own failure.

Unfortunately the military is saturated with multiple descriptive lists of what is required of a leader. This paper distills the documentation to describe the three skills most vital for successful strategic leadership. While all skills are important to successful leadership, focus must be given to those that are essential for triumph at the highest levels of national military leadership. Here is a sample from the list of skills currently espoused for leaders: the ability to influence both their organization and the external environment; wisdom and the reference framework to identify relevant information; an understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses of main players on any particular issue; and the ability to identify trends, opportunities, and threats that could affect the Army's future. In Field Manual 22-6, we find the Army also states that leaders will vigorously mobilize talent; constantly represent the Army by talking about what it is doing and where it is going, and who will participate in informed discussions among professionals.³

The United States Army War College posits that "lists of strategic leader competencies are *too* comprehensive." Thus it reduces the lists to a handful of metacompetencies that might be more useful in directing leader development efforts and facilitating self-assessment.⁴ The United States Army War College gives us six

metacompetencies required for a successful military leadership. Their *Strategic Leadership Primer* states,

The task of identifying the competencies of future strategic leaders becomes one of reducing the lists to a few *metacompetencies* that will prove useful in a) directing leader development efforts in the process of producing leaders with strategic leader capability, and b) facilitating self-assessment by officers of their strategic leader capability.⁵

Those six metacompetencies are: Identity; Mental agility; Cross-cultural savvy; Interpersonal maturity; World-class warrior; and professional astuteness.⁶ These are, as indicated by their title, metacompetencies – broad categories filled with detailed lists of what skills fall into them. In this sense, even these are too large for analysis as they contain skills that are applicable to leadership at any level. Review of both military and civilian literature reveals that it is the strategic leader, not the tactical or operational leader, who develops the vision for the organization, communicates that vision throughout the organization, and then focuses organizational efforts towards its realization.

Strategic leaders must be able to see what the future for the organization might be, transmit that vision to others, and use it to guide the agency towards success. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus write, “vision animates, inspires, transforms purpose into action,” and that the leader’s “vision or intentions are compelling and pull people toward them.”⁷ This is a consistent theme across the Department of Defense. The United States Army War College states,

Strategic leaders must learn how to scan the environment, understand their world from a systems perspective, and eventually envision different futures and directions for their organization.⁸

The Naval Doctrine Publication, *Naval Warfare*, espouses, “The commander’s intent reflects his vision and conveys his thinking....”⁹ Beyond the Army and the Navy,

the Department of Defense wants leaders who continuously assess the environment as well as the unit's progress and compare it to their initial vision.¹⁰ The "for-profit" business literature states that effective leaders determine where their organization will be tomorrow, and continually focus on results and performance that will take the organization to it.¹¹ The strategic military leader of 2025 should possess the intellectual sophistication to produce a vision that is faithful to the goals of the Nation and true to the values of its military. Vision is what differentiates strategic leadership from leadership at the operational and tactical levels where one simply determines how his or her unit fits into the vision of the strategic leader.

The term "Intellectual Sophistication" was articulated in a 1998 United States Army War College primer on strategic leadership, and is hereby defined as the sum of all the cognitive skills needed by today's strategic leader as articulated on the various lists. It includes items articulated under "cross-cultural savvy" and "mental agility" in the most recent Army War College literature.¹² An Intellectual Sophisticate is both mentally agile and culturally savvy, able to "remain grounded in National and Army values" while anticipating and understanding other groups, organization, and nations. In other words, to be "cross-culturally savvy" is to understand perspectives beyond one's own. A mentally agile intellect can navigate and adapt across situations that "lack structure, are open to varying interpretations," and where information might be contradictory.¹³ Thus a sophisticated intellect is more than just an agile or even savvy mind. The strategic leader must not only be able to operate in the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world but also must flourish in it. The agile mind can discern a vision, the

savvy intellect can understand the vision of others, and the sophisticated intellect will discern a vision that is synchronized with the vision of others.

Intellectual Sophistication is what allows the strategic leader to discern a vision that works for both her organization and the nation but a vision that is not shared and understood by those who labor towards it is of little use. Thus the strategic leader must possess a Mastery of Communication which will allow her to transmit the vision, the end state as it were; to others in terms they will understand.

When discussing this mastery, we find it useful to take terms articulated by the Army in Field Manual 22-6 under the category of “Leads Others,”¹⁴ for at the strategic level one takes the communication skills honed at the tactical and operational levels and applies them to the new environment. Indeed, it is through the leader’s ability to communicate that subordinates gain the required understanding of the vision – the organizational goals – and an understanding of how their actions contribute to success.

It is also through mastery of communication that a strategic leader builds the lateral working relationships frequently encountered at the highest levels of national leadership which are required for movement towards national goals. The strategic leader must be skilled at presenting both to large groups and individuals, with or without the use of media. The strategic leader’s actions and words need to communicate intent and purpose, using appropriate techniques to influence and energize others, relying “less on fiat, *asking* others to join in rather than telling them.”¹⁵ All forms of communication available are utilized with maturity and astuteness by a master of communication who is ever mindful that she is no longer merely a member of the profession of arms; she is a leader of a profession that serves the Nation.¹⁶ The

strategic leader must be a master of communication so that the vision, achieved through intellectual sophistication, can be brought to fruition.

We must remember, however, that the achievement of any such vision is beset by obstacles and opportunities beyond the strategic leader's control. The only thing a strategic leader, or any human being for that matter, can fully control is him or herself. Therefore, the strategic leader must possess Mature Self-knowledge so that she does not become an obstacle unto herself.

Mature Self-knowledge is the merger of elements articulated in the metacompetencies of "identity" and "interpersonal maturity" articulated in the United States Army War College's Strategic Leadership Primer.¹⁷ According to the Primer, identity is more than "simply knowing one's strengths and weaknesses as connoted by self-awareness"¹⁸ and interpersonal maturity is more than "face-to-face leadership."¹⁹ Mature Self-knowledge is more than either of these because, like a vision without articulation, self-knowledge without self-discipline is useless. Mature self-knowledge is the integration of self-knowledge with actions to correct for deficiencies in oneself. Mature self-knowledge becomes evident by the team on which the strategic leader relies. Team building actions that enhance one's strengths and compensate for weaknesses is a product of mature self-knowledge, producing true collaborative leadership as the organization moves towards the vision. A successful strategic leader must have the mature self-knowledge to not only acknowledge that one cannot possibly possess all the leadership skills and abilities articulated in the lists and books but to translate that acknowledgement into action by building teams and relationships that enhances the leader's strengths and compensates for her weaknesses. In the volatile,

uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment of 2025, it will be the empowered team and network that will bring the vision into reality.

Intellectual Sophistication, Mastery of Communication, and Mature Self-knowledge are essential items for the military strategic leader and they are developed via experience and formal education. The military, therefore, must engage its millennial soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines and examine the generational experiences they bring with them to the institutions of National defense. It can then challenge millennial service members to develop skills they have not yet acquired or temper those they possess that will not serve the Nation well. The military must also nurture those positive skills they bring with them even if those skills are not appreciated by today's leadership. But who or what is a millennial?

Who or What is a Millennial?

A Millennial is an individual born between 1977 and 2000. These individuals are comfortable with internet and computer based technologies having been raised and educated with them in an atmosphere of sheltered indulgence. They appreciate the viewpoints of others and are more embracing of alternate lifestyle choices than any previous generation. They value action over appearance for they have been saturated with commercial media and its well presented "must-have" products versus the actual limitations of those advertised product. Despite this media saturation, they are less politically engaged than those that came before. They claim to hold true with the values of their parents, marching in synchronization with them rather than in rebellion. They lack maturity and discretion but that appears to be more a constraint of experience rather than a permanent characteristic.²⁰

There are disagreements about exactly who, by year of birth, falls into the category of “Millennial.” In its research and publication, the Pew Research Center calls them “Generation Next” and claims its members were born between 1981 and 1988.²¹ Another reference includes only those born in or after 1982 while another opens the window wide, including all born between 1977 and 1994.^{22 23} Claire Raines states,

Born between 1980 and 2000, they’re a generation nearly as large as the Baby Boom, and they’re charged with potential. They’re variously called the Internet Generation, Echo Boomers, the Boomlet, Nexters, Generation Y, the Nintendo Generation, the Digital Generation, and, in Canada, the Sunshine Generation.²⁴

Our widest window, then, would place anyone born between 1977 and 2000 in the Millennials and they would be between the ages of 25 and 48 in the year 2025. Without regard for identifying a specific parameter of birth years, it is sufficient to say that the research on Millennials is useful for identifying current characteristics of those who will be our Strategic Military Leaders in 2025.

According to an interview with Neil Hoes, co-author of Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation,

A rule of thumb for generational change is that the new generation tries to excel in areas where their parent generations have fallen short. As a generation, Millennials share seven traits that differentiate them from Generation X and Boomers.²⁵

The seven traits are “special, sheltered, confident, team-orientated, conventional, pressured, and achieving.”²⁶ Claire Raines prefers to describe them as “sociable, optimistic, talented, well-educated, collaborative, open-minded, influential, and achievement-orientated.”²⁷ The Pew Research Center does not provide us with a handy list but instead publishes descriptive information as applied to four areas: “Outlook and World View; Technology and Lifestyle; Politics and Policy; and Values and Social

Issues.”²⁸ Because the intent of this paper is to examine Millennials’ characteristics as meshed with the desired qualities for strategic military leaders, we will follow the example of the Pew Research Center of discussing characteristics as they apply to the three requirements for strategic military leaders: Intellectual Sophistication; Master of Communication; and Mature Self-Knowledge. Simplistic recommendations will be made to current leaders were they might provided developmental assistance to this generation in becoming tomorrow’s leaders.

Millennials as Strategic Military Leaders and Recommendations

The Millennials are on a good trajectory to have the Intellectual Sophistication, Mastery of Communication and Mature Self-knowledge needed for vision development but some developmental challenges remain.

Previously defined, Intellectual Sophistication is the ability to form a vision grounded in one’s own values while still able to understand the viewpoint of others. The Millennial generation appreciates the viewpoints of others. According to a recent report on college seniors by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program,

For the most part, students’ experiences with diversity seemed to be positive and productive; 40.5 percent of seniors often or very often shared personal feelings or problems with students of other races/ethnicities, and 35.1 percent often or very often had meaningful and honest discussions about racial/ethnic relations outside of class with a diverse peer group.²⁹

Experiences with diversity throughout their education have fostered the development of the pluralistic orientation necessary to operate in tomorrow’s diverse society. According to the Pew foundation, approximately 50 percent of the Millennials say,

the growing number of immigrants to the U.S. strengthens the country – more than any generation. And they also lead the way in their support for gay marriage and acceptance of interracial dating.³⁰

These positive reports concerning diversity indicate that Millennials will be able to understand perspectives beyond their own. However, there is doubt that our current military leaders are ready to wholly understand the perspective of the Millennials. Currently the only sexual preference that can be openly exhibited by military members is heterosexuality. Those service members who prefer same sex relationships must not admit such a preference nor act upon it while in the service. As recently as January 2010, there are military leaders who resist any change to this discrimination³¹ despite a 2006 survey by Zogby International that found

Within military subgroups, veterans and those having served less than 4 years were also more likely to support the idea of inclusion within the military, while Active Duty Personnel, Officers, and those having served 15 or more years were less likely to agree.³²

Intellectual Sophistication, is more than just being open to other cultures or even other sexual preferences. It includes remaining grounded in one's own values, in this case the values of the nation, while appreciating and understanding the view of other ethnic groups or cultures. Here we find a challenge for current leadership. Today's military leadership will need to move beyond superficial judgments of this cohort which might hinder Millennials from remaining in the military services.

This generation does not view appearance as closely linked to professional behavior or as an easy way to determine an individual's values. More than half of this generation report to have,

Gotten a tattoo, dyed their hair an untraditional color, or had a body piercing in a place other than their ear lobe. The most popular are tattoos, which decorate the bodies of more than a third of these young adults.³³

Appearance is important to current military leaders and it is deemed evidence of one's capabilities, specifically that of self-discipline. The United States Marine Corps tells us that,

Marines are known not just for their battlefield prowess, but for their unparalleled standards of professionalism and uncompromising personal conduct and appearance. It is a Marine's duty and personal obligation to maintain a professional and neat appearance. Any activity, which detracts from the dignified appearance of Marines, is unacceptable. The use of chewing gum, chewing tobacco, cigarettes or the consumption of food while walking in uniform or while in formation, ARE examples of activities that detract from the appearance expected of a United States Marine.³⁴

Millennials would argue that personal appearance should not be judged in this manner, much as a book should not be judged by its cover. While they pierce, dye, and tattoo, they also report that "becoming a community leader is more important now than ever"³⁵ and that "the truth is that they actually share more of their parents' values than previous generations."³⁶ A civilian recruitment corporation advises that in order to retain Millennials, supervisors should "encourage their values: any way to show appreciation for their individuality and [to] let them be expressive will keep them around."³⁷ Therefore, our advice to the leaders of today is to not be immediately repelled by the initial appearance of this group. Current leadership is encouraged to minimize standardized appearance requirements whenever possible and turn its focus to developing an interest in the geo-political events of the day. This group needs to tune in and stay tuned in to the geo-political environment so that they are capable of forming a future vision that is not only creative and unique but is truly achievable and aligned with the nation's vision.

Despite the uptick in voting among young people, this generation still lags behind previous generations on basic measures of political engagement. According to the Pew Foundation,

Young people also lag behind in their interest in politics and their engagement in the political process. Only one-third of 18-25 year olds say they follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time. This compares with 54% of those age 26 and older.³⁸

The solution here might be as easy as beginning the staff meetings with a review of the daily news or specifically engaging subordinates about a current event. By demonstrating appreciation for the subordinate who can articulate current national and international situations, the leader inspires others with ambition to become followers of government and public affairs. This should not be done with a specific agenda - other than nurturing an appreciation for awareness amongst the Millennials and should highlight the fact that reports may have a particular slant that is not in agreement with other reports on the same subject. Challenging subordinates to know both sides of an argument will create agile and savvy individuals who are postured for success in the environment of 2025. In addition, given the technological savvy of this group, the leader who challenges them may see a new world of news sources - beyond the usual "Early Bird" or "New York Times" and discussing the validity of these sources will also develop intellectual savvy.

Millennials may lack geo-political savvy but they do not lack technological savvy which bodes well for the members as they become Masters of Communication. A Master of Communication uses all forms of communication available with maturity and astuteness. Millennials are adept at using many forms of communication, they may, however, lack confidence and some fear they lack discretion. They may not be

prepared for the subtleties of one-on-one negotiations nor have the ability to deftly handle intimate conversations. An August 2004 report stated that the Millennials “comfort with online communications may mask the group’s inexperience in negotiating disagreements through direct conversation and a deficit in face-to-face social skills.”³⁹

Fortunately for today’s military leader, the tool that will help refine their intellectual sophistication can also create opportunities to improve direct negotiation and verbal abilities. Discussions on current events augmented with encouragement to examine and articulate all sides of the issues, done in one-on-one meetings or as an opening to the weekly update, will help the Millennials gain confidence and improve direct conversational abilities.

Another “good news” story for today’s leader is that it appears Millennials do have the discretion to use technology effectively within required guidelines. As this group moves into the military and is inculcated with information concerning acceptable and unacceptable use of media, initial research indicates that

So far, no obvious inter-generational warfare seems to have broken out in the public-sector workplace over acceptable-use policies, perhaps because there might still be too few millennials working in government to create any significant stir. And for the most part, those who are working in government are there because they believe in public service and are therefore willing to deal with whatever constraints may come with the job.⁴⁰

Perhaps it is the current military leadership that will need to become more mature and astute. In 2007, the United States Air Force commissioned a study concerning the military implications of this online generation. The authors conclude that

If the leadership fails to understand and adapt – if it insists on harnessing millennials with outdated mind-sets, rules, and processes – it could squander a historic opportunity to reinvigorate the military and rekindle an idealistic, can-do spirit in a wide variety of institutions.⁴¹

Military leaders must challenge themselves not to allow their own biases and fears to squash the creativity this generation brings to the game. The information officer for a large Midwest American city tells us about his own failure when his staff approached him about activating a “chat” function on city computers.

“I thought I was hip and forward thinking,” [he] laughs. But instead of giving the idea the green light, he nixed it. “I said, ‘Ohm, and why don’t we get them all pillows too.’” It was the word “chat” that sent him around the bend. “All I was thinking was ‘wait until the press gets ahold of this...’.”⁴²

The military itself can look to the 2008 termination of a blog written by a United States Army lieutenant serving in Iraq. In a Washington Post article, Army Lieutenant Steve Stover, a military spokesman, states that the blog was “deemed by the commander to be counter to good order and discipline of his unit,” and that the blog had not been registered with the military. The Washington Post article suggests that an entry made prior to the shut-down depicted an officer in a disparaging manner and that this may have been the primary reason for the Army’s decision to have it terminated.⁴³ The blog’s author, Matthew Gallagher, denies that his blog was not properly registered but acknowledges that the termination of the blog is clearly his own fault. He had not had the post in question properly reviewed. Gallagher writes,

Due to a rash posting on my part, and decisions made above my pay-grade, I have been ordered to stop posting on Kaboom, effective immediately. Though I committed no OPSEC violations, due to a series of extenuating circumstances – the least of which was me being on leave – my “The Only Difference Between Martyrdom and Suicide is Press Coverage” post on May 28 did not go through the normal vetting channels. It’s totally on me, as it was too much unfiltered truth. I’m a soldier first, and orders are orders. So it is.⁴⁴

When specifically challenged on this point by the author of the Washington Post article, Gallagher refused further comment. He has since left military service and is under contract to publish a book version of his blog. It will be “a far more in-depth

exploration of our experiences than what I was able to put on this blog.”⁴⁵ In the end, the officer has left the service and yet his words will be published – only now they will be published without the oversight of the Army.

If current leadership moves beyond its comfort zone, it may find that the interconnectedness of this generation solves other problems. Millennials are

adept at gathering information and sharing it with peers. The U.S. military has long struggled to smooth interservice rivalries and achieve better working relations between military and intelligence operations. Corporations face similar challenges in getting people to work together fluidly and productively across functional, regional, and operational boundaries. Might Gen Y, with its deeply ingrained habits of openness and teamwork, eventually succeed in breaking down some of these barriers?”⁴⁶

Millennials have the potential to become Intellectual Sophisticates and Masters of Communication if encouraged by today’s leaders to become engaged in current government and public affairs both to improve their intellectual sophistication and communication skills. What then, of their Mature Self- Knowledge?

Mature Self-Knowledge is the integration of self-knowledge with knowledge of how one is perceived as a leader and is evidenced by team and relationship building actions that enhance strengths and compensate for weaknesses.

Self awareness and understanding yourself have been recognized as an essential developmental skill for improving life success since the time of Socrates. A reasonable extension suggests that more accurate insight and self awareness of one’s own strengths and weaknesses, skills, knowledge, and values, should be related to successful leadership potential and performance.⁴⁷

Millennials do not currently possess “accurate insight and self awareness” but this is a function of experience and feedback rather than a generational characteristic. Among military members, it is obvious that the experience of an Army captain results in

less accurate self-assessments than that of a lieutenant colonel.⁴⁸ Beyond the natural teacher of experience, the military has a tool for the improvement of self-awareness.

Traditional performance appraisal measures are generally one sided and lack the ability to deliver accurate objective feedback. 360 assessments provide a collaborative tool for professional development utilizing superior, peer, subordinate, and self assessments to create a more balanced circle of feedback.⁴⁹

This paper recommends use of 360 evaluations at reoccurring stages of a soldier's career to facilitate development of accurate assessments. This recommendation applies to all members of the military but is encouraged more for the Millennials as a means of acquiring accurate self-assessments more quickly than time naturally provides.

One such product is the on-line product available via the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback website provided by the Combined Arms Center for Army Leadership.⁵⁰ Evaluation from multiple sources is valuable because superiors do not generally observe leaders dealing with tasks and interpersonal issues first hand and thus may not provide as accurate feedback as subordinates and peers can concerning interpersonal qualities.⁵¹ Mature Self-Knowledge requires one to be aware of these interpersonal qualities and to compensate for them by developing relationships that enhance strengths and balance weaknesses. Reports indicate that the members of the millennial generation are ready to embrace collaborative leadership.

Concerning collaboration, we find that "Millennials depend upon their friends to help learn new skills, particularly in the information, technology, or gaming arenas. In short, the byproduct of the many millennial friendships is collaboration..."⁵²

and

When working with Millennials, it is essential to understand the importance of team thinking and team planning. This generation feels a sense of empowerment – they expect to do great things with the rest of their lives, and they expect to do them in collaboration with their peers.⁵³

Millennials are accustomed to collaborative efforts having been repeatedly “organized in teams.”⁵⁴ Howe and Strauss see a generation that does more than verbalize a position. They see a group who will build “hands-on organizations to get things done,”⁵⁵ and that

Millennials aren’t doing this as entrepreneurial loners. Instead – in keeping with their generation’s team orientation – they’re banding together, in their own clubs and classes, on-line, and (especially) in national uniformed service organizations.⁵⁶

While Millennials have a “look at me” reputation based on their utilization rates of social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and My Yearbook,⁵⁷ and have been describe as “another indulged generation,” self-absorbed and Pollyanna-ish,⁵⁸ the Pew Research Center posits that they are “big advocates of compromise in governance,”⁵⁹ as well as more likely to favor an “internationalist approach to foreign policy.”⁶⁰ This provides evidence that if they gain accurate self-knowledge they will have the required discipline and inclination to move beyond self. They have the willingness to compromise as necessary. Good military leaders

become familiar with the full range of military culture through many sources: classroom education, broad reading, especially formal documentation and doctrinal manuals, but mainly through direct operational experience and training.⁶¹

360 evaluations will provide Millennials with feedback on how they conducted themselves during operational experiences and training, enhancing their development of tacit leader knowledge and where they have strengths and weaknesses as a leader. Thus, given time, they should develop the required, “accurate insight and self

awareness.” This coupled with their strong tendencies towards collaboration indicates that they have the ability to move past their current “look at me” reputation to become the Strategic Military Leaders we will need in the year 2025.

Concluding Thoughts

The United States faces a future in which its world domination of a bi-polar or uni-polar world will not be the status quo. The increased urbanization of the world’s population, the continued globalization of the economic market, the rise in power and influence of China, India, and others, coupled with the continued erosion of the Westphalian system of legitimate Nation-states wielding power across geographic regions produces relative certainty that the United States will face a geo-political landscape more complex than ever experienced in its 250 years of existence. The strategic military leaders of this future are the Millennials, born at the end of the 21st century and now at the beginning of military careers. They have been molded in an atmosphere of sheltered indulgence but possess high confidence levels about the future and their place in it. They are diverse and technologically engaged. They lack maturity, but this is more a function of experience and age rather than any specific generational characteristic. They possess an openness that will serve the Nation well in a world where it is not the sole hegemon. If today’s leaders can move beyond their own fears of technology; if they can successfully encourage the Millennials to become politically informed and improve their verbal communication skills; while providing accurate feedback that allows them to grow from their experiences; this group will possess the Intellectual Sophistication, Mastery of Communication, and Mature Self-knowledge required to be the leadership this Nation will need well into the year 2025 and beyond.

Endnotes

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